

Summary of Act 150, Public High School Choice in Vermont – February 2008

Enacted by the Legislature in 2000, Act 150 required that, by September 2001, all Vermont public high schools join with at least one other high school to form choice regions. There were no geographic or numerical limits; regions did not have to be composed of adjacent districts, and regions could have more than two schools. During this school year, 61 public high schools are members of regions varying in size from two to 18 schools.

The law specifies the following:

- Application procedures and permissive deadlines,
- Unless regions choose a different date, applications are due from students on March 1st, and decisions are due on April 1st; the Department of Education maintains a current list of all regions in the state,
- Unless all districts in a region agree, no tuition or other costs may be charged to other districts; students and families participate without cost,
- Sending districts cover special education and technical education costs,
- Permissible limits on the number of students a school must allow to apply to transfer to other schools: five percent or 10 students in any year, whichever is smaller; limits may be larger,
- Annually, receiving schools shall determine their capacity to enroll choice students,
- A lottery is required if the number of students exceeds the limits set by the schools for transferring out or enrolling in,
- Allows students to remain in the new school in subsequent years without re-applying, within certain parameters (i.e., graduation, no longer living in Vermont, or serious discipline issues),
- Superintendents shall establish clearinghouses for families needing information about transportation options that would help them exercise choice,
- No funding is provided for transportation.

The first time students transferred was during school year 2002-2003. In school year 2007-2008, 379 students take part in the school choice program.

Act 150 requires the Commissioner of Education to report to the Legislature in January of each year on the implementation of various aspects of the law. The January 2005 report made recommendations on a range of school choice policy options for the future.

In 2006, the Legislature repealed the section in Act 150 which was scheduled to repeal the entire law in July 2007. Therefore, Act 150 remains in effect unless amended or repealed by the Legislature.

In January 2005, the State Board of Education proposed to the Legislature a statewide school choice program for grades K–12. The Legislature took no action.